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SUBJECT: JERUSALEM MEDIA REACTION (11/19): Continued settlement activity and home demolitions dominate the Palestinian press

Main Stories:

The three dailies prominently report on President Obama's statement in reaction to the Israeli government's approval of constructing 900 housing units in Gilo. The headlines quote President Obama as saying that "this action embitters the Palestinians in a way that could end up being very dangerous." Al-Hayat Al-Jadida quotes the President as saying "I think that additional settlement building does not contribute to Israel's security, I think it makes it harder for them to make peace with their neighbors." Al-Quds considered Obama's statement a "strong message" that reflects the critical status of the peace process. Maan reported that this was a rare personal pronouncement on the subject. The dailies also report on Prime Minister Salam Fayyad strongly condemning the Israeli decision, saying "these Israeli measures prove that our position of resorting to the UN to seek international recognition of a Palestinian state was correct."

The lead photos in all dailies are of Israeli bulldozers demolishing a Palestinian house, two stores and a women's center in the Essawiye neighborhood in East Jerusalem yesterday. Al-Quds quotes Fatah official for Jerusalem Affairs Hatem Abdel Qader noting that there is an unprecedented Israeli wave of demolishing homes in East Jerusalem and noted that since the beginning of 2009, the Israeli authorities have issued more than 2300 demolition orders against Palestinian houses in East Jerusalem.

Under its lead headline, Al-Ayyam reports "Israel challenges the whole world by laying the corner stone of a new settlement in Jabal Al-Mukabber neighborhood in East Jerusalem yesterday." The coverage notes that American Jews who came to Israel to buy houses in East Jerusalem and the West Bank participated in the ceremony. The

coverage also notes that Israel refused to authorize a Palestinian request to construct 200 housing units in East Jerusalem.

Al-Quds reports on the Israeli authorities obstructing a high court decision to evacuate settlers from a building in the Silwan area of East Jerusalem yesterday.

News on the prisoners exchange deal between Israel and Hamas receives front page coverage in the dailies. The reports quote several sources saying that the deal might be implemented on the first day of the Al-Adha feast. The news wasn't confirmed by Hamas or Israeli officials.

The dailies report on the Al-Aqsa Foundation for religious and cultural heritage noting that Israel started construction for two tunnels and two elevators that will facilitate the access of more tourists and settlers to the mosque.

BLOCK QUOTES:

Al-Quds runs an editorial under the title "Continued Settlements and Repeated International Hypocrisy" (11/19): "The international community is condemning Israel for continued settlement activities, but at the same time does not support the Palestinians obtaining international recognition of their state. This international hypocrisy will continue as long as the power is with Israel and the Palestinians are helpless."

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